



VIRGINIA CSBG BOARD TRAINING

Discussion Guide

The purpose of this document is to further the discussion among board members after watching each segment of the board training. Each part has discussion question component along with a quiz. At the end of this document, you will find an appendix with the quiz answers, an activity and resources.

Part 1 – History and Purpose of Community Action

Webinar Link: <https://youtu.be/LZnL8QZ3zqk>

Discussion Questions:

1. Ultimately the CSBG Act's purpose is to REDUCE poverty, REVITALIZE low income communities and EMPOWER low income families to become self-sufficient. Think about your agency's mission and programs. How does your agency's mission and programs fit the purpose of Community Action?
2. When EOA was passed it was passed along with (list from slide 2) was designed for local control and community involvement how do you feel your agency and board uphold that commitment to community solutions and local control? Do you feel being a designated CAA creates more opportunities for your agency?

Quiz Questions:

Answers in Appendix

1. Who is often considered the architect of the Community Action movement?
2. What is the name of the initial piece of federal legislation that created the Community Action Program and authorized federal funding for the program?
3. When was this legislation enacted?
4. What was the mandate in the Economic Opportunity Act that initiated the concept of tripartite board composition for CAAs?
5. Is the Economic Opportunity Act still in force? If not, what replaced it and how is it different?

Part 2 – Board Composition

Webinar Link: <https://youtu.be/omVOgREaFTU>

Discussion Questions:

1. Do we have language in our bylaws establishing a board governance committee?
2. How does the board generally ensure that it is recruiting individuals to serve on the board who meet the needs of the CAA?
3. Is a board matrix used? If so does the matrix include all of the important skills and needs on your board?
4. How does the CAA ensure that it fills board vacancies in a timely manner?
5. Discuss the difference in meeting the requirement vs. the intent of tri-partite board structure. Do you believe your board is meeting the intent of the tri-partite board structure.
6. If your board values the voices of each section within the tri-partite structure, what is the impact of having vacancies for long periods of time.

Quiz Questions:

Answers in Appendix

1. Can a CAA have a tripartite board that is not divided into equal parts, i.e., into thirds?
2. Does a low-income representative need to be low-income themselves?
3. Can the public sector represent more than 1/3 of the slots on the board?
4. Describe the intent of a board matrix.

Part 3 – Board Governance

Webinar Link: <https://youtu.be/GjlxWEnLZ98>

Scenario Discussion Questions:

SCENARIO 1:

A board hired a CEO who was formerly the board chair and is a close personal friend of many board members. CEO actions that appear noncompliant with policy are rarely questioned, and when some board members raise concerns, the majority response is that “we trust her.” What should the concerned board members do?

SCENARIO 2:

The CEO has made a major change to the organization’s programming, to the dismay of some clients. Clients question how the board could have allowed the CEO to make that decision. What should the board do?

SCENARIO 3:

A board discovers that there has been a serious problem with the financial systems. The board addresses this problem with the CEO. The CEO excuses himself, saying that he was not aware of the problem and thus cannot be held accountable for it. How should the board react?

Fiscal Discussion Questions:

1. Nonprofits try to have 3-6 months of operating expenses in their reserve fund. How many months do you have?
2. Who is responsible for presenting financial reports and documents to the full board?
3. For nonprofits, the average % of revenue from government support is 15%-20%. What % of your revenue is from government sources?
4. Are your audits completed and submitted on time?
5. In your last audit did you have corrective actions needed?
6. Can your ED sign grants and contracts alone (without a board signature)?
7. Approximately what is your total budget size?
8. Would you rate your agency’s overall financial health as Great, Concerning, or Bad?

Quiz Questions:

Answers in Appendix

1. What are the three duties?
2. How often is a Conflict of Interest Policy required to be signed by board members per CSBG Organizational Standards?
3. Finish the sentence: Make sure organization has written policies and controls that are ____.
4. True or False: Board of Directors are legally responsible for managing the entities assets.

Part 4 – Board Roles and Responsibilities

Webinar Link: <https://youtu.be/IJf6LOz02IM>

Discussion questions:

1. Discuss the board's committee structure. Does the current committee structure allow for deep analysis of reports?
2. How is the board involved in strategic planning? Is there follow up throughout the year on your strategic plan?
3. Take a minute and think about your agencies vision, is it inspiring, is it easy to talk about, does it achieve the desired outcome of your agency?
4. Discuss the board's role in the ROMA Process (Assessment, Planning, Implementation, Achievement of Results, and Evaluation).
5. During board meetings, do you feel comfortable asking questions and offering comments on information that is presented?
6. Who is responsible for presenting financial reports and documents to the full board, is that a finance committee function or a staff role? Discuss the pros and cons of each.
7. Are training opportunities offered to the full board on understanding information given in the financial packets, 990's or agency audit? Discuss the types of trainings that you have received as a member of this board and what types of trainings are still needed.

Quiz Questions:

Answers in Appendix

1. Who is the boss of the Executive Director?
2. How often is an agency required to complete a strategic plan according CSBG Organizational Standards?
3. Describe a Whistleblower policy.

Appendix:

Part 1 Quiz Answers:

1. Who is often considered the architect of the Community Action movement?
 - a. Sargent Shriver. Shriver was enlisted by the U.S. president at the time, Lyndon B. Johnson, to map out an approach to the War on Poverty.
2. What is the name of the initial piece of federal legislation that created the Community Action Program and authorized federal funding for the program?
 - a. The Economic Opportunity Act
3. When was this legislation enacted?
 - a. August 20, 1964.
4. What was the mandate in the Economic Opportunity Act that initiated the concept of tripartite board composition for CAAs?
 - a. Written into the Economic Opportunity Act was the mandate that Community Action Programs at the local level be developed, conducted and administered with the “maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas served and members of the groups served.”
5. Is the Economic Opportunity Act still in force? If not, what replaced it and how is it different?
 - a. No. In 1981, Congress repealed the Economic Opportunity Act and passed legislation championed by the Reagan administration that combined 57 formerly discretionary grants into 9 block grants and reduced funding for those programs. The idea behind changing these grants from discretionary grants to block grants was to reduce federal spending, limit the federal government’s role in social programs, and transfer responsibility and authority for those programs to state and local governments. The Community Action Program was one of the discretionary grant programs repealed in 1981 and replaced with a block grant program – the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program.

Part 2 Quiz Answers:

1. Can a CAA have a tripartite board that is not divided into equal parts, i.e., into thirds?
 - a. The federal CSBG Act does not require that each of the three parts of the tripartite board be equal to 1/3 of the total. Rather, section 9910 of the federal CSBG Act requires that a CAA’s tripartite board be composed of 1/3 elected public officials (or appointed, if no elected one is available or willing to serve); no fewer than 1/3 democratically elected representatives of the low-income individuals and families from the community served; and the remainder from major groups and interests in the community served. Thus, the Act allows for more than 1/3 of the board to be comprised of low-income representatives as long as 1/3 are elected public officials (or appointed, if necessary). However, it is

important to note that some states may require in their CSBG laws and/or policies that each sector of the board be exactly 1/3 of the total rather than adopt the federal CSBG Act language.

2. Does a low-income representative need to be low-income themselves?
 - a. No, a low-income representative does not need to be low-income themselves, they need to be democratically selected by represent a low-income community.
3. Can the public sector represent more than 1/3 of the slots on the board?
 - a. No, the public sector is exactly 1/3 of the slots on the board.
4. Describe the intent of a board matrix.
 - a. The intent of a board matrix is to ensure your nominating or membership committee understands what skills, experience, etc. is needed on your board so the slots can be filled efficiently and effectively.

Part 3 Quiz Answers:

1. What are the three duties?
 - a. Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty, Duty of Obedience
2. How often is a Conflict of Interest Policy required to be signed by board members per CSBG Organizational Standards?
 - a. Every two years
3. Finish the sentence: Make sure organization has written policies and controls that are _____.
 - a. Followed
4. True or False: Board of Directors are legally responsible for managing the entities assets.
 - a. True

Part 4 Quiz Answers:

1. Who is the boss of the Executive Director?
 - a. The Full Board
2. How often is an agency required to complete a strategic plan according CSBG Organizational Standards?
 - a. Every 5 years a strategic plan needs to be completed.
3. Describe a Whistleblower policy.
 - a. A whistleblower policy encourages staff and volunteers to come forward with credible information on illegal practices or violations of adopted policies of the organization, specifies that the organization will protect the individual from retaliation, and identifies those staff or board members or outside parties to whom such information can be reported.

Activity (Can be done in person or on Zoom using Breakout Rooms):

1. Ask your board members what they would say if someone asked them why they cared enough to serve on this board. If they ran into someone at work or socially, what would they say? What speaks to you deeply about our work?
2. Give them a few moments to write down some notes to themselves – what would they really say if given the chance?
3. Then tell them in just a minute we will ask everyone in the room to get up out of their chairs, find a partner, and share these thoughts with FOUR other board members.
4. Explain the exercise:
 - a. You'll find a partner.
 - b. Introduce yourself in case they may not know you well.
 - c. Then share your story.
 - d. Each person should take about 30 seconds.
 - e. I'll keep time and call out "Change partners!" when it's time to find another partner.
5. Then launch them: "Everybody up!" Have them stand up, find someone to talk to, and share their perspective briefly with four other board members, one after the other.

Debrief when everyone is finished:

Ask these questions:

- What was their experience like? Let different people talk.
- What were they saying?
- How were they being?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Was it fun or awful?
- What did you learn from other board members?

Resources:

CAPLAW Board Assessment Checklist:

http://caplaw.org/resources/SelfAssessmentDocuments/CAPLAW_BoardSelectionChecklist_2012.pdf

Community Action Partnership Board Resources:

https://communityactionpartnership.com/search-page/?fwp_1=board-governance

CAPLAW Board Training Portal:

<https://caplaw.org/resources/PublicationDocuments/CSBGTrainingToolsforNonprofitBoards.html>

BoardSource: BoardSource develops practical resources, templates, checklists, guides, and tools that are instantly downloadable.

<https://boardsource.org/board-support/training-education/download-resources-tools/>